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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to provide teachers with a rationale for teaching the mass media. It also contains a discussion of different methods to be used in teaching the media. The influence of the media on contemporary society is examined and the importance of the mass media in the educational process is stressed. In addition, the paper presents six purposes for teaching the media and developing a media-oriented curriculum as well as the purposes for teaching various kinds of media: visual media, print media, and electronic media. Finally, the paper includes reasons for teaching how the media influence people through advertising and persuasion and concludes with a listing of instructional materials designed to increase awareness of the media's influence. (RB)

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Media In The Future Tense

By Molly J. Wiseman

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MEDIA STUDY IN THE FUTURE TENSE

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Introduction

Educating students to help them cope with today's society and methodology is already out of date. The knowledge explosion is upon us with the memorization of facts and figures on Monday possibly irrelevant by Tuesday morning. The focus must shift to the future.

According to Dr. Robert Hilliard of the Federal Communications Commission, 'At the rate at which knowledge is growing, by the time the child born today graduates from college, the amount of knowledge in the world will be four times as great. By the time that same child is 50 years old, it will be 32 times as great, and 97 per cent of everything known in the world will have been learned since the time has was born.' (9, p.157) Are the schools keeping up with this rapid information development? Are students being assisted in learning how information is compiled, cataloged and sent to its receivers? Are students learning how to understand the material, or are they being taught to memorize it?

Because 95 per cent of the information a person receives after the completion of his formal education comes from the mass media, are students being assisted in understanding it? The information changes, facts disappear and records are broken, but the material is still being disseminated by some medium. What should students believe? What is objectivity? How may they use this information the rest of their lives? What is the best way to assist them in understanding it?

Are textbooks the best way? Most of them are at least a year out of date by the time they are published. Should a lecture method be used? Should the students learn through a relationships or a cultural heritage method? Or should each individual inquire on his own?

'It is the task of the teacher to help give students the tools and attitudes that will help them and us survive in the midst of a historical transformation.' (10, p.198) A student '. . . must be able to act—to adapt to change, to be a viable human being while undergoing a severe form of cultural stress, future shock.' (10, p.199) How should this be accomplished?

Part I What Does The Future Bring?

People are alive today who crossed the nation in a covered wagon in the 1800s and who saw man land on the moon via television in 1969. A trip which once took a few months from the East Coast to the West now takes only a few hours. A message which took weeks to reach thousands of miles away years ago, can now be accomplished in seconds. With 96 per cent of the American homes having television sets, a major news event is not missed by many persons as it occurs. Many changes have taken place in the last several years. Have the changes been as rapid in the schools? Or as Postman and Weingartner say of the educational system, 'It is as if we are driving a multimillion dollar sports car, screaming, 'Faster! Faster! while peering fixedly into the rearview mirror.' (6, p.xiii)

Students of the early 1900s memorized facts, read from specific textbooks chosen for them, sat in rows facing a chalkboard and the teacher's desk and attempted to keep quiet. What do the students of the 1970s do? They memorize facts, read from specific textbooks chosen for them, sit in rows facing a chalkboard and the teacher's desk and attempt to quiet. What did the students of the early 1900s study? They studied reading, writing, arithmetic, history, spelling, literature (possibly including Shakespeare in some schools), science and a few technical subjects such as agriculture or domestic education. Seventy years later, those same subjects still are taught, along with, of course, more technical areas such as industrial arts, more literature electives (Chaucer, British literature of the 1800s and poetry) and career education classes. Education has come a long way.

Postman and Weingartner, in *Teaching as a Subversive Activity*, say teachers today seem to conduct their classes as if the only media invention around was the printing press, and that the electric plug did not exist. And what about the content of those classes? So little of the media is covered that it makes one wonder if television is here to stay.

Film, as we know it today, has only been around about 75 years. Radio has been with us for the past 50, and television close to 30. Have they proven themselves yet to be studied in the classroom? Nicholas Johnson, a Federal Communications Commission member, said, 'The average child before entering kindergarten will have received more hours of instruction from television than he will receive in a college classroom getting his BA degree.' (7, p.1) Robert MacNeil, a former NBC newsman, says, 'Television has caused a more radical change in political communication than any other development since the Republic was founded. Nothing before television altered so drastically the techniques of mass persuasion.' (4, p.xiii) Radio stations are beginning to cater to a specific audience through commentary, music and feature selections. WBBM Radio of Chicago calls itself the 'electronic newspaper' with its all-news format. And will there be a real electronic newspaper of the future? According to Walter Cronkite on a CBS 21st Century television program, it may be possible for a person to receive an individualized printed newspaper in his home from a communications center. The reader could dial his preference of that day's events—40 per cent sports, 20 per cent business, 20 per cent commentary and 20 per cent general news, for instance. Children 10 years old and under have the ability to make movies now with inexpensive movie cameras (some under $20), and more than 60 films are shown on television each week. How much of a high school curriculum is devoted to the study of these media?

Technology has advanced more rapidly in the past 50 years than in the previous 5,000 years (8, p.28) The

pace is becoming much more rapid as time continues. Take a look at the 'time' of the past:

> . . . we will use media . . . and the metaphor of a clock face. Imagine a clock face with 60 minutes on it. Let the clock stand for the time men have had access to writing systems. Our clock would thus represent something like 3,000 years, and each minute on our clock 50 years. On this scale, there were no significant media changes until about nine minutes ago. At that time, the printing press came into use in Western culture. About three minutes ago, the telegraph, photograph and locomotive arrived. Two minutes ago, the telephone, rotary press, motion pictures, automobile, airplane and radio. One minute ago, the talking picture. Television has appeared in the last 10 seconds, the computer in the last five, and communication satellites in the last second. The laser beam–perhaps the most potent medium of communication of all–appeared only a fraction of a second ago. (6, p.10)

What does man digest daily from media?

> In the United States today, the median time spent by adults reading newspapers is 52 minutes a day. The same person who commits nearly an hour to newspapers also spends time reading magazines, books, signs, billboards, recipes, instructions, labels on cans, advertising on the back of breakfast food boxes, etc. Surrounded by print, he 'ingests' between 10,000 and 20,000 words per day of the several times that many to which he is exposed. The same person also probably spends an hour and a quarter a day listening to the radio–more if he owns an FM receiver. If he listens to news, commercials, commentary or other such programs, he will during this period, hear 11,000 pre-processed words. He also spends several hours watching television–and another 10,000 words or so, plus, a sequence of carefully arranged highly purposive visuals.
>
> Nothing, indeed, is quite so purposive as advertising, and today the average American adult is assualted by a minimum of 560 advertising messages daily. Of the 560 to which he is exposed, however, he only notices 76. (9, p.166)

If advances in the media have been so rapid, and a person ingests so much material a day from the media, why have the schools lagged so far behind? Is it because it is difficult to 'stuff' films, television and radio programs, advertisements, newspapers and magazines into a book? After all, can a class be taught today without a text? Is it because students already know more about media than their teachers? Or is it because it is difficult to change curriculum? 'What was good for students 20 years ago is certainly good enough today,'seems to be a common response. Another 'reason' seems to be that teachers and administrators fear extra expense when teaching media. Utilizing different methodology and new teaching techniques, a media course need not cost anymore (maybe less) than any other class while still helping students to understand tomorrow's media.

With videophones in existence now, cable and public access television use increasing daily, entirely new full-length movies shown on TV weekly and new magazines appearing monthly and the possibility of 'shopping in the future via telecommunications from the home,' (8, p.29) what has education been doing? It is time that educators glance(even through squinted eyes) at what the future brings and what its media means to the students of today.

Part II Person Centered Inquiry Method of Learning

Teaching mass media may require a new perspective for both the students and the teacher, in comparison with other courses. No longer can students be spoon-fed material from a book or lectured to on what they should have learned from last night's newspaper.

> The time is coming, if it is not already here, when children can learn far more, far faster, in the outside world than within schoolhouse walls. This danger signal is only one of many new signals flashing in school systems throughout the world. The signals say that something is out of phase, that most present day schools may be lavishing vast and increasing amounts of time and energy preparing students for a world that no longer exists. (5, p. 23)

With the rapid changes taking place in the world, particularly in the mass media, a new emphasis must be placed on how to teach media curriculum.

'The discipline of curriculum deals with the dynamics of interaction of the teacher, the students, and the environment which includes skills, information, and values directed toward an educational goal.' (1, p.6) The discipline of media curriculum must place a great emphasis on the 'interaction' of skills, information and values in order for students to learn.

To accomplish this objective, 'new roles may be necessary for students and teachers. Students of the future will be rewarded for diverseness and imagination. Responsibility for the effectiveness of learning will be shifted from the student to the teacher.' (5, p.24)

'The secondary school has been accused of taking the position that the student should adapt himself to the curriculum, rather than that the school should adapt the curriculum to the student. For the curriculum to be relevant, the student must be able to see relationships to his life, to view a thing or problem as potentially pertinent to him or possible to utilize or accomplish.' (11, p. 24)

John Goodlad suggests, 'directing learning toward *learning how to learn,* and toward self-sustaining inquiry, rather than to memorizing and regurgitating facts.' (3, p.7)

One form of curriculum that may accomplish all these tasks is the personalized curriculum organization, in which 'each student has the right and responsibility to experience continual emergence or newness, i.e. to experience progress.' (1, p.1) This form of curriculum stresses individual inquiry, individual progression, learning by doing, learning to make choices and the advancement of self-concept.

> The personalized curriculum regards the person as an individual who has a natural wonder of the world about him. He is curious, inquisitive, hopeful. As he goes from one event to another in which he feels a sense of satisfaction this natural wonder increases. The person is a thinker, a decision-maker, a doer, a believer, an appreciator. He has feelings which are as real as his hands. He should perceive himself as an adequate human being, recognize that he has a unique contribution to make to society and function in such a way as to make this contribution. (1, p.1)

The personal curriculum is one which stresses inquiry. 'The inquiry method is very much a product of our

electric age. It makes the syllabus obsolete; students generate their own stories by becoming involved in the methods of learning. Where the older school environment asks, *Who discovered America?* the inquiry method asks, *How do you discover who discovered America?* The older school environment stressed that learning is being told what happened. The inquiry environment stresses that learning is happening in itself.' (6, p.29)

Several teaching principles are inherent in the personalized curriculum theory. 'The teacher establishes an environment rich in educational opportunity, then listens, observes, suggests, evaluates, records and gives approval as the student: self-selects, self-directs, self-evaluates, self-reports his own educational opportunity and plans ahead for his own growth. The question which the teacher uses in approving the student's selection of the educational situation is: *Will this permit the student to progress in skills, information, values?* The teacher trusts the student. (1, p.5)

The personal curriculum differs from possibly the most common curriculum organization pattern, that of cultural heritage or subject matter form, in that the center of learning switches from the teacher and his subject matter in cultural heritage to the student and his needs in the personal curriculum form.

A traditional cultural heritage mass media class could mean students sitting in rows, following the teacher's objectives, following a text chapter by chapter, supported by teacher lectures, exercises, films, etc. A personal curriculum class could mean students setting their own objectives, deciding how and when they should be met and through what resources. The classroom might have many resources and options available at one time. For instance, books, games, audio tapes, slides, a film or two and some magazines might be in the room for use. The teacher could also serve as a resource. Students might choose their own materials – viewing or reading them whenever they wish, working on projects, making presentations to each other, or forming small discussion groups of their own. Students may wish to interview the teacher, or ask the teacher to prepare or coordinate information for them (in the form of a discussion, question-answer session, role-playing situation, game, visual presentation or whatever.) Students would be working at their own pace to fulfill their own objectives.

Evaluation in the personal curriculum would be an individual matter. A student may wish to pursue a particular letter grade, a number of points, units of credit or the completing of a few objectives. The student would state his objectives and method of evaluation at the beginning of the unit or class. A student should suggest a time limit on completing the objectives. Were the objectives fulfilled? The measurement could be completed by the student and teacher and/or an outside source. The system should be agreed upon by all involved.

One type of evaluation which might be undertaken at any point in the continuum of the objectives being met is the WD/OI system (Well Dones/Opportunities to Improve). A simple written form is completed by the student, teacher and others involved. A piece of paper is divided down the middle, with the WDs on the left and OIs on the right. It is important that the statements be written before the evaluator come together for discussion. The statements are shared and compared. All is done in a positive manner. Another type of evaluation would be a chart or question-answer form (or discussion) covering the objectives.

Part III Discovering Methods of Teaching Media

Note: The personal curriculum cannot follow any 'cookbook' pattern of teaching, since each individual student basically designs his own course of study. However, several exercises, ideas for mass media units and projects are given for the students and teachers to incorporate and re-design for their own use. A few suggestions are also given for an advanced (possibly publications) course in media as well.

In a year-long course of mass media, students may wish to explore basic communication techniques and patterns, sign language, braille, symbollic or design language, coding, visual language (including photography and film), print media (the printing process itself, newspapers, mgazines, layout and design), writing or constructing material for the media, electronic media (radio and television), persuasion, press law, advertising and other areas. They may also wish to study or research what experts have to say about the different media, construct or design new media of their own or simulate media problems.

A semester course would be more limited, timewise, in what students could accomplish, as would a nine week or shorter unit class. In a very lmiited time span, of, for instance, two to four weeks, a student may choose only one or two areas to explore, or several students may wish to carry on a simulation for that time period. Of course, students may wish to continue any inquiry on their own through independent study after a formal unit is completed.

Exercises and resources are really unlimited. The following may be used or similar ones designed by the students and/or teacher:

General overview of the media–

1. Purpose: To see diversity in the communications process. Do a comparison poll of how various persons received a given important piece of news. What does it say about the mass communication process? (12, p.27)
2. Purpose: To study how persons react to the unusual. Have students give away balloons to strangers. Blow up several balloons and go to a shopping center or the city hall or some other place away from school and attempt to give balloons to the strangers with the words, 'Here is my present for you,' or something similar. Report on the reactions which are received and discuss them. (12, p.28)
3. Purpose: To discover how media emphasis changes. Trace an incident through the media including television, radio and newspaper. What facts change, what authorities are cited, and what difference in 'play' does it get? (12, p.28)
4. Purpose: To show the differences in the audiences of mass media. Have students select two magazines which contain advertising for the same product, but which also appeal to different audiences. The students should analyze how the advertisers slant their ads for the different audiences and discuss the implications for the article writers. (12, p. 30)
5. Purpose: To show pre-conceptions and the need to do research even in common everyday areas. The teacher should ask the students to draw a map of the United States (including all the states and three or four major cities, labeled) On the back of the paper, the student should write his name and birthplace. The maps will be collected at the end of the time period (usually 45 minutes to an hour.) The students should not be given the opportunity to view any maps, photos, etc. during their drawing period. The maps will probably show many things. One, the student's own state is often larger (and if from the Midwest, centered) than others.

The eastern part of the United States is often shown in equal size to the western states. If a student is well-traveled, his map will usually be more accurate.

6. Purpose: To show how persons react. Split the class in half and have one group appear cleancut, etc., and the other unorthodox (no shoes, etc.) Have each group take a petition with the Declaration of Independence or Bill of Rights or sections of them typed on it (but not labeled), and ask the public to sign the petition. Have each group keep a record of comments and reactions from the public. Compare the percentage of persons who signed for each group and the reasons people gave for not signing. (12, p. 31)

Visual Media–

1. Purpose: To present comparisons in media. Make a multi-image slide presentation using two or more projectors and a soundtrack. Note the audience's reaction to the media, discuss what they saw and heard. (12, p. 51)
2. Purpose: To help students understand and work with acquired meanings of words and sounds without visuals. Have students paint pictures of different colors with sounds on tape. Students should create the feeling on tape for 'yellow', 'purple,' etc. What does the audience 'see' during the tape? (12, p. 51)
3. Purpose: To see if a visual exercise reaches it audience. Shoot a film aimed at a specific audience with a definite point of view of no more than two minutes in length. The student should test his idea by presenting it to the group whom he shot it for and relating his results to the class. (12, p. 51)
4. Purpose: To see if students can discover and follow through visual instructions on their own. For any exercise (and a good one might be to learn how to take, develop and print photos), use only visual instructions (cartoons, diagrams, pictures, etc.). The student's finished report or product should show whether or not he succeeded.

Print Media–

1. Purpose: To study print audiences. Interview local news dealers (actual dealerships for delivery, subscription agencies, newsstands, etc.) on the local sales figures for the various magazines. Relate the figures to the demographics of the community. (12, p.69)
2. Purpose: To compare print media coverage. Arrange with one local news medium to receive carbons of one day's news from each the Associated Press and United Press International. Compare the coverage as well as the facts and emphasis of comparative stories. (12, p. 68)
3. Purpose: To study space allocations for print. Evaluate the newspaper in terms of space used for national, international, state and local news, photographs, informational features and entertainment. Do different days of the week vary? How do different newspapers compare? (12, p.68)
4. Purpose: To determine readership. Do a readership study of the school newspaper or magazine by either story or page methods. Which pages or departments of the paper do the students read first in preference, second or third? (12, p.68)
5. Purpose: To coordinate knowledge learned in writing, editing, design and layout. Students will write, edit and layout a miniature newspaper (or two-page bulletin) for the class or selected groups of students, tying together skills learned.

Electronic Media–

1. Purpose: To compare network generalizations. Study and compare the television network programs. Is there a specific audience being sought or point of view being expressed by each network? (12, p. 84)
2. Purpose: To determine alternative choices in the media. Monitor television adventure shows and children's programs to compare the amount of violence that occurs. What alternatives are the characters given to this violence? (12, p.84)
3. Purpose: To utilize electronic media. Have students prepare a TV program for a specific audience or a tape show on a news event, soap opera (complete with sound effects), etc.

Advertising–

1. Purpose: To determine eyeflow in ads. Have students bring in or identify several major eyeflow patterns, then sketch an ad of their own demonstrating the 'C', 'Z', etc. patterns in ads. How do ad designers make use of the patterns?
2. Purpose: To coordinate knowledge learned or discovered about advertising. Students will invent a product of their own (as a motorized skateboard, remote control vacuum cleaner, spray-on makeup, etc.) and then market the product for specific audiences through seven or eight ads or commercials.

Persuasion–

1. Purpose: To discover prejudice in media. Watch television news shows and record the amount of editorial comment made by the newscaster including gestures and voice inflection. Do you think he has influenced the audience's reaction to the news? (12, p.84)
2. Purpose: To view angles in comic strips. Analyze a particular comic strip over a period of several days and generalize about the author's attitude toward a democratic government and basic American values. (12, p.84)
3. Purpose: To study editorial viewpoints. Bring in several editorials, on the same or similar topics if possible, to review the facts and support made in each one.

Gaming–

1. *Coping*, by Jerry K. Ward, published by Interact, $12. Participants experience future shock brought about by the communications explosion. A new language is learned. It is based on a four-week unit. (2, p.55)
2. *Futura City*, by the *Newsweek* Education Department, $47 for the kit with records or $49.95 with cassettes. The simulation introduces students to Alvin Toffler's concept of Constituent Assemblies. Role playing used. (2, p.55)
3. *Global Futures Game*, by Bill Bruck, Earthrise, $5 for eight players or $10 for up to 48 players. This simulation introduces participants to global planning using technology, population, food and education. It takes 10 rounds of play to complete. (2, p.55)

For an advanced class (publications or production course)–

For a group of students or class publishing a periodical, the personal curriculum system is a natural route. The students are in control–they decide the publication's format, what stories will be assigned and written, how the material should be presented and what deadlines should be given.

Seldom will they be using a text (except possibly for a reference point), working on the same material at the same time, or even working in the publications room at the same time. They may set up their own objectives, determine their own grade based on their performance and the stand of their editorial views. They are not confined to chairs in rows, nor to raising their hands to speak. Although formats for school publications vary greatly, the personal curriculum method does not vary in its application to this type of class.

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